

JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRAM AND PERFORMANCE

Activity: Natural Programs

Program Components	1999 Estimate	Uncontr/ Related Changes	Program Changes (+/-)	2000 Budget Request	Change From 1999 (+/-)
A. Rivers and Trails Studies	900	13	0	913	+13
B. Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance	7,035	175	+3,250	10,460	+3,425
C. National Natural Landmarks	943	22	0	965	+22
D. Hydropower Recreation Assistance	210	7	+285	502	+292
Total Requirements \$(000)	9,088	217	+3,535	12,840	+3,752

AUTHORIZATION

16 U.S.C. 1271 - 1287	The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 1241 - 1249	The National Trails System Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 4601 - 4601-3	The Outdoor Recreation Organic Act
16 U.S.C. 797(e), 803(a)	The Federal Power Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 470 - 470(m)	The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
16 U.S.C. 1a-5	National Park Service Organic Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 1273	Historic Sites Act of 1935
16 U.S.C. 1-5	General Authorities Act of 1970, as amended
16 U.S.C. 1908	Mining in the National Parks Act of 1976
Public Law 104-333	Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996

OVERVIEW

Natural Programs include providing technical assistance to States, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to help them increase river and trail opportunities; carrying out Congressional mandates to study rivers for possible inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System and of trail routes for possible designation as national scenic or historic trails; and managing the National Natural Landmarks Program.

APPLICABLE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MISSION GOALS

- Ia Natural and cultural resources and associated values are protected, restored and maintained in good condition and managed within their broader ecosystem and cultural context.
- Ib The National Park Service contributes to knowledge about natural and cultural resources and associated values; management decisions about resources and visitors are based on adequate scholarly and scientific information.
- IIIa Natural and cultural resources are conserved through formal partnership programs.
- IIIb Through partnerships with other Federal, State, and local agencies and nonprofit organizations, a nationwide system of parks, open space, rivers, and trails provides educational, recreational, and conservation benefits for the American people.

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A. Rivers and Trails Studies FY 1999 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments

Enacted: \$900,000

River and trail studies are undertaken when authorized by Congress. In order for a river to be eligible for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, it must be in a free-flowing condition and possess one or more of the following values to a remarkable degree: scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values. Suitability is based upon such factors as the extent of public lands in the immediate environment of the river; funds required for acquisition, development, and management; and local or State interest in acting to protect and manage the river and the feasibility and timeliness of such action. Studies may be the responsibility of either Interior, Agriculture, or the shared responsibility of both departments. Studies of rivers are transmitted to Congress with a Presidential recommendation. Congress then decides whether or not to add the river to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

- The Service is currently studying the following rivers: Concord (Massachusetts), Sheenjek (Alaska), Merrimack (New Hampshire), White Clay Creek (Pennsylvania and Delaware), Delaware (Pennsylvania and New Jersey), New (Virginia and West Virginia) and Wekiva (Florida) Rivers. The St. Marys (Florida and Georgia), study is completed and is awaiting Presidential transmittal to Congress. All remaining river studies are expected to be completed in FY 2000.

Trails are studied to determine whether they are feasible and desirable to include as a unit of the National Trails System. A determination of desirability for the National Trails System is based on the national significance of the route and the recreational or historic resources along the route. A determination of feasibility is based on the practicability of establishing such a trail in consideration of existing trail opportunities, costs that would be entailed, impact on other values of the resource base, and similar factors.

- Trail studies are authorized by section 5(c) of Public Law 90-543, as amended, and may also be the responsibility of Interior, Agriculture or the joint responsibility of both departments. When a trail study is transmitted to the Congress it includes the Secretary's recommendation as to the feasibility of establishing the trail. Congress then decides whether or not to add the trail to the National Trails System.
- The Service is conducting studies of the Old Spanish Trail (New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California), and Women's Rights (Massachusetts and New York). The Old Spanish Trail study will be completed in FY 1999. The Women's Rights study will begin in FY 1999.

A goal for this program will continue to be the completion of studies within Congressionally authorized study periods, or NPS estimates for dates of completion. The results of the river and trail study program in FY 2000 will be monitored through surveys of study users and the success in achieving enhanced resource protection.

B. Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program FY 1999 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments

Enacted: \$7,035,000

Through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program, the NPS provides technical assistance and organizational support for locally led conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives. Staff based in 22 field locations play the "junior partner" to a variety of nonprofit organizations and local and State governments. The NPS becomes involved when formally asked by local officials, landowners, and other citizens who share the desire to protect or to improve their communities. The NPS also brings technical expertise in public involvement, publications, organization building, design, and site restoration. In FY 1998, citizens made over 400 project requests, but less than half of those

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received assistance. All projects are founded on cost-sharing, cooperation, and community initiative. The range of assistance provided include the following:

- *Trail and Greenway Development* - For millions of Americans trails and greenways are a link to the outdoors, a place for healthful exercise, and auto-free transportation routes. The RTCA helps communities plan and protect many types of trails and greenways, ranging from urban trails to rugged tracks into the wilderness. The program also helps communities successfully access Federal trail dollars available through the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st century.

- *Rail-To-Trail Conversions* - The NPS helps communities learn how to keep abandoned railway corridors from being lost by converting them into popular "rail-trails." The Service alerts communities whenever an abandonment of nearby rail rights-of-way is imminent; approximately 80 such notices are provided annually, giving communities timely opportunities to initiate rail-trail planning for hundreds of miles of potential trails each year. Moreover, nine rail-trail conversion projects are benefiting from intensive NPS technical assistance in 1999.

- *River and Watershed Conservation* - The NPS offers a variety of services that help communities conserve valuable rivers and floodplains. With NPS help, 21 States (most recently North Carolina) have conducted statewide river assessments, which help prioritize conservation efforts and develop needed policies and programs. The NPS can help communities develop proactive strategies to lessen the risk of flood losses; for example, rather than re-build in the floodplain after two devastating floods, 27 property owners in Westernport, Maryland moved to higher ground, and the RTCA is helping restore floodplain open space that will reduce future flood losses while improving recreational and environmental education opportunities. The NPS also is helping more than 25 communities plan downtown river greenways, and helping another 24 partners devise river protection strategies that address land management throughout an entire watershed.

- *Interagency Assistance* - By collaborating with other Federal agencies, the NPS helps bring greater resources to community-based conservation efforts and satisfies its mandate to provide Federal coordination for recreation. Program staff is involved with several interagency partnerships including: the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community initiatives sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development; a Natural Resources Conservation Service partnership that provides streamlined services from six Federal agencies in thirteen cities; the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Initiative; the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council; the Interagency Task Force on Floodplain Management; and the Interagency Trails Council.

- *River Designations* - The NPS helps States attain Wild and Scenic River designation for rivers that they will manage themselves. The RTCA maintains the Nationwide Rivers Inventory, a register of more than 3,500 river segments whose outstanding resource values make them potentially eligible for designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers and whose inclusion in the inventory gives them a measure of protection.

Examples of Long-Term Project Benefits:

Through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program partnerships, the NPS is generally most involved in a project's early stages, helping local partners develop a project vision and a strategy for bringing the vision to life. For this reason, full implementation of RTCA-assisted projects may take place several years following Park Service involvement; GPRA performance measures are thus designed to examine local results five years following NPS involvement.

- *Taconic Trail System Plan, Massachusetts/New York* - Over 6,000 acres of trail-side lands have been protected through State acquisition as well as numerous easements granted to both public and nonprofit entities. These strategic moves, identified by the NPS-assisted planning process, will protect the long-term value of the region's trail network and the significant investment of time and labor that built it.

- *Mountain-to-Sound Greenway, Washington* - Early in the development of this ambitious project, its board of directors worked with NPS to produce a concept plan for the Greenway. This effort has since preserved 110 miles of river corridor and approximately 52,000 acres of parkland and open space.

National Recreation and Preservation/Natural Programs**Performance Goals**

Long-term Goal IIIb1	By September 30, 2002, conserve with NPS partnership assistance 1,580 additional miles of trails, 2,060 additional miles of protected river corridors, and 61,700 additional acres of park and open space, from 1997 totals.
Annual Goal IIIb1	By September 30, 2000, conserve with NPS partnership assistance an additional 1,120 miles of trails, an additional 1,580 miles of protected river corridor, and an additional 247,700 acres of park and open space, from 1997 totals.
Long-term Goal IIIb2	By September 30, 2002, 80% of communities served are satisfied with NPS partnership assistance in providing recreational and conservation benefits on lands and waters.
Annual Goal IIIb2	By September 30, 2000, following finalization of the study instrument and methodology in FY 1999, set target that 77% of States, communities, and nonprofit organizations served are satisfied with NPS partnership assistance in providing recreational and conservation benefits on lands and waters.

Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Performance Information	FY 1998 Actual*	FY 1999 Estimate**	FY 2000 Estimate**
Miles of trails protected through RTCA assistance	700	220	220
Miles of rivers protected through RTCA assistance	1,100	240	240
Number of acres of open space protected	33,700	7,000	7,000
Percent of communities served satisfied with assistance ***	Establish baseline	75%	77%
* Miles and acres protected are counted five years after a technical assistance project is completed, because local initiatives to protect the resources or construct the trails generally take at least five years to complete.			
** The Service did not know the full measure of the impact of RTCA partnerships when GPRA goals were first established. When the Service's strategic plan is assessed and revised at the 3-year mark, these goals will be examined for possible increases.			
*** The methodology and survey instrument for determining satisfaction of communities served were developed in FY 1998 and are being reviewed by OMB; results of the first round of surveys should be available by March 1999.			

Through these and other activities, the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program supports the achievement of performance goals IIIb1 and IIIb2: Conservation Assistance and Community Satisfaction. Working on-site with grassroots groups in local communities throughout the country helps to build a nationwide system of parks, open spaces, rivers, and trails. The goal for FY 1999 seeks to add miles of trails, protected river corridors, and acres of parkland and protected open space that will enable educational, recreational, and conservation benefits through a nationwide system of parks, open spaces, rivers, and trails.

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FY 2000 BUDGET REQUEST

	2000 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)
▪ Rivers and Trails Conservation Program \$(000)	10,460	+3,250
The FY 2000 request for Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program is \$10.460 million, which represents an increase of \$3.425 million over the FY 1999 enacted level. The FY 2000 proposed programmatic increase of \$3.250 million to Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance activities includes:		
	\$(000)	
▪ Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance	2,000	
▪ Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails	1,250	
Total	3,250	
Justifications for these increases are included at the end of this activity's presentation.		

***C. National Natural Landmarks Program
FY 1999 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments***

Enacted: \$943,000

Qualified sites are evaluated by the National Park Service and designated as National Natural Landmarks (NNL) by the Secretary of the Interior. By 1989, there were 587 national natural landmarks. The Service annually prepares a Section 8 Report to Congress identifying any damaged or threatened national natural landmarks. The NPS regions monitor the condition of designated national natural landmarks (NNLs).

- In late 1989, a moratorium was placed on NPS consideration of new sites for national natural landmark designation until a program evaluation could be completed. Although designation does not change the ownership of a property or dictate land uses, it is important that landowners are appropriately notified about what designation does or does not do in terms of using private property. To respond to these concerns, the Service undertook a management evaluation of the program in 1990 to identify material and other weaknesses and propose measures to address them.
- As a result of the review, proposed revised regulations were published in the Federal Register in November 1991, public hearings were held in January 1992, and final regulations were prepared for publication. In addition, current landmark owners were contacted and a program handbook was developed. An automated database has been developed and distributed, data continue to be collected, entered, and quality checked.
- Required field-level program responsibilities include monitoring the condition of designated sites and providing liaison with landowners. Program coordinators keep the national natural landmark ownership profile current and accurate (over 10,000 NNL owners); foster partnerships with Federal, State, local, and municipal agencies and conservation organizations; and provide program information to interested parties and technical assistance to landmark owners if requested. Site evaluation responsibilities will be resumed upon publication of the revised regulations.

When the revised program regulations are published in the Federal Register, they will be mailed to all landowners and administrators along with an invitation/option to remain with or withdraw from the program. This will likely occur in early 1999. The letter will be accompanied by the new program regulations and a brochure. Boundary adjustments

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and database modifications will be made where withdrawals are requested. A decision will be made about preparing a Section 8 Report for 2000 since the legal mandate ends after 1999.

D. Hydropower Recreation Assistance
FY 1999 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments

Enacted: \$210,000

Through a collaborative settlement process with hydropower companies and local and recreational communities, the Park Service is involved at various stages in the hydropower licensing/relicensing process. Full implementation of recreation related mitigation may take place several years following NPS involvement; GPRA performance measures within this component are designed to examine local results following settlement and/or the signing of a new hydropower operation license.

In FY 1998, Park Service staff assisted in the negotiation of a Federal operating license for hydroelectric facilities along the Wisconsin River that brought about the protection of over 200 miles of river corridor. The new license also will improve recreational access to the river and protect the recreational experience for its users.

In FY 1999, the National Park Service will work on 22 hydropower relicensings in ten States, participating in a process established by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The NPS facilitates negotiations, designs whitewater boating studies, and works with power companies and user groups to lessen conflicts among industry, boaters, and anglers.

FY 2000 BUDGET REQUEST

	2000 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)
▪ Hydropower Recreation Assistance \$(000)	502	+285
The FY 2000 request for Hydropower Recreation Assistance is \$0.502 million, which represents an increase of \$0.292 million over the FY 1999 enacted level. The FY 2000 proposed programmatic increase of \$0.285 million to Hydropower Recreation Assistance activities includes:		
		\$(000)
▪ Hydropower Relicensing Assistance		285
Total	285	

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JUSTIFICATION OF FY 2000 BUDGET REQUEST FOR NATURAL PROGRAMS

	2000 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)
Natural Programs \$(000)	12,840	+3,535

The FY 2000 request for Natural Programs is \$12.840 million and 129 FTE, which represents an increase of \$3.752 million and 31 FTE above the FY 1999 enacted level. The programmatic increase of \$3.535 million for the Natural Programs activity is justified by the proposed changes that follow:

▪ ***Rivers and Trails Technical Assistance (+\$2,000,000; +20 FTE)***: The NPS is requesting an increase of \$2.0 million and 20 full-time equivalents in FY 2000 to provide additional technical assistance for river and trail conservation. Through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program, NPS provides technical assistance and organizational support for locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives. Staff based in 22 field locations play the “junior partner” to a variety of nonprofit organizations and local and State governments. NPS becomes involved when formally asked by local officials, landowners, and other citizens who share the desire to protect or to improve their communities. The NPS also brings technical expertise in public involvement, publications, organization building, design, and site restoration. All projects are founded on cost-sharing, cooperation, and community initiative. Projects are implemented largely using local, State, and private funds, with NPS assistance typically leveraged many times over.

In FY 1999, citizens made over 400 project requests, but less than half received assistance. This increase would allow the Service to:

- Satisfy 75 new projects requested annually, thereby allowing RTCA to establish a significant presence in eight new areas currently under-served;
- Provide RTCA staff to help communities find appropriate strategies for preserving their sense of place by protecting trails, parks, historic landscapes, rivers, and watersheds;
- Achieve a “critical mass” for program capability in all parts of the country, putting staff closer to the people and communities they serve, and decreasing travel costs;
- Forge strategic partnerships to achieve Service goals through cost-effective cooperative agreements, and create local linkages with existing Federal programs and funding sources to maximize their effectiveness; and,
- Meet or exceed the Service’s GPRA goal of protecting 1200 miles of rivers, 1100 miles of trails, and 35,000 acres of open space over 5 years, and in so doing give partner communities and organizations the skills and confidence they need to handle conservation projects without additional Federal assistance.

Coordinate with the U.S. Geological Survey Community/Federal Information Partnership to assist local communities in using GIS and other new technologies to develop open space preservation plans.

The proposed increase will expand the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance base program and allow it to meet a growing demand for services in all States both by adding new staff in existing offices and opening new field offices in locations currently hard to serve efficiently, such as New York, Honolulu, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis, and Sarasota.

The need to expand RTCA’s services is supportive and consistent with numerous Service and Administration policies and plans and would further aims such as:

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The President's Lands Legacy Initiative. Elsewhere in the President's budget for the NPS, \$150 million for conservation grants to States, Tribes, and local governments to protect open spaces, greenways, wildlife habitat, urban parks, and outdoor recreation opportunities. It also includes \$50 million in planning assistance grants to States for developing open space preservation plans that address some of the problems associated with urban sprawl. An expanded RTCA can provide States, Tribes, and local governments with technical assistance in preparing open space preservation plans and conservation grants applications.

The Department's Mission 2000 theme "Resource Restoration and Protection: Our legacy to future generations." We help these communities with their parts of the national tapestry of parks, open space, trails, and restored rivers.

The Vice President's Clean Water Action Plan. This plan calls for a Watershed Management Framework with a goal of providing federal staff to assist local watershed organizations in their restoration efforts. An expanded RTCA presence in watershed and stream restoration projects will allow staff to support local restoration efforts in every State.

The Surgeon General's report on Physical Activity and Health. This landmark 1996 report -- akin to the report on smoking a generation ago -- documents the growing public health toll due to physical inactivity and urges all Americans to get just 30 minutes of moderate activity five days a week. Since a principal barrier cited for not exercising is lack of close-to-home recreation resources, significantly expanded RTCA capability will help over 350 communities offer Americans new trails and protected open spaces where they can get their needed physical activity.

Accelerated expansion of RTCA's workforce diversity. The Service, through a range of partnership programs, has long served urban areas. This request would play a vital role in revitalizing communities in America's cities and allow the Service to serve these and other communities with a diverse workforce.

To meet and exceed the current GPRA five year goal III(b)(1). This goal calls for an additional 1100 miles of trails developed, an additional 1200 miles of river corridors protected, and an additional 35,000 acres of park and open space to be conserved with NPS partnership assistance since 1997. To begin to create the level of new river, trail, and open space resources needed by the growing American population, the NPS could help State and local governments add an additional 280 miles of recreational trails, 310 miles of recreational river corridors, and 9,000 acres of recreational parkland, compared to 220 trail miles, 240 river miles, and 7,000 parkland acres added in 1998.

The NPS estimates that the increase will enhance the Service's ability to meet the long-term goal of providing educational, recreational, and conservation benefits through a nationwide system of parks, open spaces, rivers and trails. The additional funding will contribute to the protection of an additional 200 miles of trails, 300 miles of river, and 8000 acres of park and open space.

▪ ***Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails (+\$1,250,000; +1 FTE):*** The NPS is requesting an increase of \$1.250 million and one full-time equivalent in FY 2000 for Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails in support of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). The CBP is a multigovernmental, interstate partnership that has been guiding restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. In joining the program, the Park Service agreed to contribute to the restoration, interpretation, and conservation of the Chesapeake Bay's many resources -- both within the national park areas of the watershed and in coordination with others striving for the bay's recovery. Prior year support has been minimal.

Public Law 105-312 (Title V), Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary), in cooperation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA Administrator) to provide technical and financial assistance to identify, conserve, restore, and interpret natural, recreational, historical, and cultural resources within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The ultimate intent of Section 502(a) is to create a linked network of Chesapeake Bay Gateways sites and Chesapeake Bay Watertrails that will collectively enhance public education of and access to the Chesapeake Bay. In support of this intent, Section 502(b) authorizes the Secretary in cooperation with the EPA Administrator to establish a Chesapeake Bay Gateways Grants Assistance Program.

The proposed funding request will support this initiative. Approximately \$1.0 million will be provided to State and local governments, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector through 1:1 matching grants to

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support access and interpretation projects. Approximately \$250,000 will be used for identification of the gateways and watertrails network, technical assistance, and to support one FTE. This position will be responsible for coordinating a grant selection process inclusive of the EPA and other Chesapeake Bay Program partners, administration of the grants, and brokering technical assistance and support. Components of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network may include State and Federal parks or refuges; historic seaports; archeological, cultural, historical, or recreational sites; or other public access and interpretive sites as selected by the Secretary. The legislation authorized the program and \$3.0 million annually through FY 2003.

- ***Hydropower Relicensing Assistance*** (+\$285,000; +3 FTE): The NPS is proposing an increase of \$285,000 and three full-time equivalents in FY 2000 for hydropower relicensing assistance. This increase will provide dedicated staff in geographic areas of increased demand over the next decade: California, the Southeast, Alaska, and the Northeast.

The NPS is one of the many Federal resource agencies with which a hydropower applicant must consult in preparing an application for a license. In selected hydropower projects, National Park Service staff provide technical assistance to citizen's groups, hydropower applicants, and various levels of government on subjects such as meeting present and future public outdoor recreation demands, (e.g. access, instream flows, facilities), and maintaining and enhancing the quality of the project's environmental setting, particularly riparian areas. The National Park Service additionally provides initial review of hydropower proposals for potential interaction with program areas under its purview such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, National Historic Landmarks, Long Distance Trails, National Park Service units, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, and rivers on the Nationwide River Inventory.

The NPS plays a significant role in the relicensing of the Nation's private dams operating under the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The Park Service has been a key player in a number of precedent-setting settlement agreements, which have achieved major gains for conservation and recreation: acres protected, river banks restored, wildlife and recreation releases provided, access sites established, funds dedicated for long-term management. A trend in the number of FERC licenses expiring -- from 5 in 1997 to 36 in 2000 and 236 in the next decade -- will result in a dramatic increase in requests for NPS assistance in negotiating settlement agreements.

This increase will enhance the Service's ability to meet the long-term goal of providing educational, recreational, and conservation benefits focused on nationwide river resources associated with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydropower relicensing sites. The additional funding is expected to result in the protection of a minimum of 30 river miles.